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Former CIA analyst calls Reagan's policies toward Nicaraguans unrealistic

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President Ronald Reagan's policies toward the Nicaraguan government are a throwback to traditional American policies of the 1950s and an unrealistic approach to the problem, said a former CIA analyst Wednesday at the University of Utah.

David MacMichael, now a member of the Council on Hemispheric Affairs in Washington, D.C., spoke as part of Central American Week, sponsored by the University Central American Network.

MacMichael said that even though Reagan will likely get all or part of the \$100 million in aid sought for the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, such assistance will probably not do much to overthrow the existing Sandanista government there.

"We hear a lot about terror lately. But now, our government is becoming involved in a war marked by terror. Sadly, some of these acts are being done by people financed by our tax dollars," he said.

The Contras are failing because they have allowed military concerns to take priority over political issues, MacMichael said. Successful revolution depends on the priority of political issues and support from the people.

Aid will allow minor acts of terror by the Contras to be carried out from bases in Honduras, but no victory is in sight. However, MacMichael said, such action by the United States makes an invasion of Nicaragua more likely.

"Such a move would only expand the tragedy in that country. It would also provide the Soviet Union with a propaganda windfall they will use to

its greatest benefit."

Reagan's obsession with the Nicaraguan conflict is setting the stage for major changes in American foreign policy, he said. The trade embargo in Nicaragua and the transfer of aid to Honduras, which will likely benefit the Contras, are just two examples that Reagan will not let Congress stop him from proceeding with his policies.

He said Congress is placed in a double-bind on the Contra aid issue. Voting against Reagan makes a congressman vulnerable to being labeled soft on communism. On the other hand, there is the potential that congressmen might have to explain the deaths of American soldiers there, MacMichael said.

"American blood is the lubricant for patriotic fervor," he said, expressing concerns the the Reagan administration is trying to provoke the need for direct intervention in Nicaragua.

MacMichael, who worked for both the Department of Defense and the CIA in Central America, said he is just beginning to understand Nicaragua.

"It is very difficult, no matter how long you spend, to really get to know a country. You are never able to slip into the skin of the people, even after years."

He said Reagan's picture of Nicaragua is unreal, bearing not the slightest resemblance to the country he has visited.

Quoting a Canadian military officer, MacMichael said the only solution to Nicaragua's problems is the Contadora peace process — negotiations for a Central American solution to a regional problem. If left alone, Nicaragua is likely to develop on its own the concepts of political pluralism and non-alignment.